

[2 August, 2001]

RAJYA SABHA

being discussed in the Sixth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, and reiterated support for its early finalisation.

Transfer of prisoners from Myanmar Jail

1281. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact of Shri S. Gandhi Singh and three others who have been in Myanmar Jail since 1995;

(b) if so, in which Myanmar Jail they are kept as prisoners; and

(c) whether Government have not taken up the matter with Myanmar Government for transferring them in country to keep them under country's legal system?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. They are in Mandalay Jail, having been convicted under the Narcotics Act of Myanmar. The Indian Embassy in Yangon maintains contact with the prisoners through consular access and checks on their welfare.

Number of talks between India and Pakistan

†1282. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:

SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of round of talks have been held between India and Pakistan over the years; and

(b) if so, when, where and of which levels the same were held and what have been the main issues during each round of talks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) India is committed to establishing peaceful, friendly and cooperative relations with Pakistan. While working towards this objective, over the last three years (July 1997—July 2001) the following have been the significant bilateral meetings between India and Pakistan:

- (i) In 1998, India initiated the Composite Dialogue involving bilateral discussions at the official level on 8 identified subjects. The Composite Dialogue seeks to build trust and confidence, establish a stable structure of cooperation and address outstanding issues between the two countries. Discussions on Peace & Security including CBM's (Foreign Secretary level), and Jammu & Kashmir (Foreign Secretary level), were held at Islamabad from 16 to 18 October, 1998. Discussions on Siachen (Defence Secretary), Sir Creek (Surveyor General/Additional Secretary), Tulbul (Secretaries Water & Power), Terrorism and Drug Trafficking (Home/Interior Secretaries), Economic and Commercial Cooperation (Commerce Secretaries), and Friendly Exchanges (Secretaries, Culture) were held at New Delhi from 5 to 13 November, 1998.
- (ii) In February 1999, Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Lahore on the inaugural Delhi-Lahore bus service. During the visit the Lahore Declaration was signed by the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Foreign Secretaries of both countries, and both sides issued a Joint Statement.
- (iii) In March 1999, External Affairs Minister, Shri Jaswant Singh met his Pakistani Counterpart at Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka on the margins of the SAARC Council of Ministers meeting and discussed matters pertaining to follow-up of the Prime Minister's Lahore visit held earlier in the year. The Foreign Secretaries also met.
- (iv) In July 2001, President Pervez Musharraf visited India on an invitation from Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The Summit level meeting contributed to a better understanding of

each sides view point. The entire gamut of our relations were discussed during these talks. India emphasised the need to build an atmosphere of trust for progress on all outstanding issues including Jammu & Kashmir. We also focussed on cross-border terrorism and conveyed that India had the resolve, strength and stamina to counter terrorism and violence till it was decisively crushed.

In addition to the above meetings, in June 1999, External Affairs Minister Shri Jaswant Singh met his Pakistani counterpart Mr. Sartaj Aziz at New Delhi, during the Kargil conflict. During this meeting Pakistan was told in clear terms that Pakistan's armed intrusion and aggression at Kargil has to be vacated.

Recognition of Musharraf by India

1283. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item under the heading "History may blame India for recognising Musharraf" which appeared in the Hindustan Times dated the 21st June, 2001;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) whether it is a fact that India was the first country to have recognised General Pervez Musharraf's self-appointment as the President of Pakistan while global international community did not react favourably to this position and if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir. Government have seen the report appearing in the Hindustan Times on 21st June 2001.

(b) and (c) The Prime Minister's invitation to the President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf was an act of great statesmanship, and in keeping with our traditional approaches to